'THE RINGWOOD FIELD NATURALIST' CLUB NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 36 April, 2013

EDITORIAL: The Club's weekend at Mansfield in March continued the long tradition of field naturalists clubs in Victoria, first established in 1880, where community groups offer programmes for those interested in bird-watching, wildflowers, cryptogams, marine zoology, bushwalking, geology, landscape appreciation, Aboriginal cultural heritage, photography and local history. From the beginning, these societies have attracted enthusiastic amateurs as well as professionals such as Professor Frederick McCoy and Baron von Mueller. Many school children in the 1940s and 50s would have been influenced by Philip Crosbie Morrison's radio programmes on nature and carried a love of the natural world into later life. Members of our Club have been recognised for their contributions in the field by the award of the Natural History Medallion. Field naturalists across the State are still working hard to promote and conserve our precious and irreplaceable natural heritage.

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Leader Roger Needham (foreground right) and other members explore the mysterious environment of the dry swamp containing tassel cordrush clumps at the Yarram weekend

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PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Beenak - 23rd September 2012 Leaders - Alison & Peter Rogers

Twenty three members attended our outing to the Beenak area. For some, Ship Rock Falls and Kurth Kiln were a new area to visit and for others it was a return after many years.

During the morning the excursion involved either walking down to the Falls or looking around the car park at the birds and plants. There was a profusion of flowers especially the delicate pink of the Tetrathecas, other flowering plants included Pea flowers, Hoveas, Comospermum as well as a Bird orchid.

Leaving the Ship Rock Falls area we had a roadside stop before reaching Kurth Kiln. Again flowers were the focus with varieties of Hakea, Dampieras and Pimeleas in full colour.

Lunch was held in the picnic area at Kurth Kiln before the afternoon walks. Our first walk was along the creek to look for the clubmoss. We were pleased to see large patches in good condition. Along the walk were mounds of coral fern as well as wattles, Spyridiums and pea flowers. Other highlights on this walk included a tree Hovea in flower, the sighting of a koala and a large Copperhead snake sunning itself. Some members were lucky to see a Rose robin on this walk.

Near the picnic area, members took in the history of the kiln and watched a spotted pardalote diving into a nearby grassy bank. Some members then took the option of departing for the afternoon or going on one of two short walks. One small group started along the Scout Camp Track, while another small group went along the Kurth Kiln 'Trak' where a white Hovea was of particular interest.

You Yangs Regional Park – 13th October 2012

Leader - David Hewitt

Despite a rather poor weather forecast 16 members gathered at the You Yangs. We spent about an hour near the rangers hut and saw a good collection of birds. A number of wildflowers were on display, most notably the snowy mint bush (*Prostanthera nivea*) which was in prolific flower throughout the Park and the Inland Pigface (*Carpobrotus modestus*) which seemed to be very widespread. In terms of area it was only matched by the ubiquitous boneseed, which obviously remains as a real problem.

Then we drove to Big Rock to inspect the aboriginal rock wells and a number of birds in the nearby bushland before going to the Turntable for lunch. Judith set up her microscope so that we could inspect the crystalline structure of the granite rock which forms the You Yangs. Afterwards we walked along Rockwell Road towards Big Rock, where we had good sightings of a number of birds including a scarlet robin nesting. A possible highlight was a pair of apparently mating weevils! We then visited the area around Brays Bog towards the eastern limit of the park. This area was particularly notable for good sightings of Horsfield's bronze cuckoo and a very friendly pallid cuckoo. Here we also found the only orchids of the day – a number of unopened sun orchids.

Fortunately the weather held out for most of the day with only one or two very brief showers and the bird count on the day was pretty good with a total of 43 species.

Prostanthera nivea

Carpobrotus modestus

Pallid Cuckoo

16-18th November 2012 - Spring Camp at Yarram

by Leaders Inta and Roger Needham

Friday 16th November - Some members and visitors began arriving about noon and by 3pm, 21 people joined an outing to Dogtrap Road, Won Wron where, on the edge of the forest about 15 species of bird were seen, the highlight being a Satin Flycatcher. After an hour we drove through the forest and stopped opposite a fire dam on Holmans Road. To our surprise a number of orchids were found – Bearded and Hornet orchids and a Musky Caladenia. A third stop further along the road revealed more local wildflowers and on the way back to Yarram an unscheduled stop was created by the sighting of a large goanna, which scampered across the road up a large tree where it disappeared into a hollow. Back at Yarram we had happy hour, a bird call and dinner at the BBQ Area in the Rosebank Caravan Park.

Saturday 17th November - We woke to a fine, sunny, windless morning, ideal conditions for our outing to McLoughlins Beach. Everyone (28 members & 5 visitors) made their way across the bridge over Corner Inlet to the 90 Mile Beach. Some bush birds and a few orchids were found along the sandy track. At 10.30am some drove while others walked to McLoughlins Beach Jetty for morning tea. Whilst crossing the boardwalk some in the group saw a Striated Fieldwren, White-fronted Chats and Bar-tailed Godwits. Waders seen from near the jetty were thought to be Marsh Sandpipers. Thanks to Hazel and Alan for the use of their 'scope. Next destination was Manns Beach in the hope of sighting more waterbirds. Swans, Cormorants, Shelducks, Red-necked Stints and Greenshanks were spied on the water. From Manns Beach the convoy snaked along to Telegraph Road, Alberton, where at the entrance to Nooramunga Coastal Park, we were greeted by a marvellous display of Little Grasstrees, Purple Flags, Dampieras and other wildflowers. Chairs were arranged in a circle on the roadside verge and lunch was eaten amidst a lot of banter. Then people wandered off to examine the area in more detail. Striated and Spotted Pardalotes, New Holland and White-naped Honeyeaters, were some of the birds seen, while Large Duck Orchids were seen in numbers on the sandy track to the west. White Woman's Waterhole was next on our list and a circuit of the waterhole added Sacred Kingfisher and Australasian Grebe to the bird list while fungi, chocolate and vanilla lilies were added to the plant list.

16-18th November 2012 - Spring Camp at Yarram (cont)

We headed north along McKenzie Road and stopped beside a fire dam to see a patch of blue Sun Orchids. They were not fully open but there were lots of them. Gang Gang Cockatoos were seen in the trees overhead and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos and a Fantail Cuckoo were heard. Our final stop was at a track off McKenzie Road to which Kaye Proudley had led us. After tramping through a forest of Banksia serrata which was growing on a spongy peaty soil, we came across a dry swamp containing tens of very large Tassel Cord-rushes, (*Baloskion tetraphyllum*) some over 1.80 meters tall with thick black trunks. Also here Kaye showed us a flowering Erect Marsh Flower (*Villarsia exaltata*). Those who braved the bush bash were surprised at what they saw. Others in the group indulged in more birding and saw Silvereyes, Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebill and a Scarlet Robin. We drove back to Yarram and members spent the next hour either preparing for dinner or having a well-earned rest. Dinner was eaten at the Caravan Park BBQ again, but this time salads and desserts were shared while each family provided their own meat. After dinner we had birdcall and members enjoyed conversing around the fire for quite some time.

Sunday 18th November - Our convoy headed toward the Tarra Valley in warm overcast conditions. It is a very scenic drive along the narrow valley road. The first stop was the Tarra Valley Picnic area from where the walking track to Cyathea Falls commences. Scarlet Honeyeaters were heard calling from the treetops as we entered the carpark. In the dark temperate rainforest through the Myrtle Beech and ferns, sightings were made of a Bassian Thrush, Rose and Pink Robins and Scarlet Honeyeaters. Some members saw Eastern Yellow Robins eating the Beech Orange fungi, which were found in places along the track. After morning tea in the carpark, we drove up the narrow road, which is under repair due to landslips, to the Tarra-Bulga Visitor Centre. The whole group walked to the Suspension Bridge and back to the Visitor Centre – quite a long, strenuous walk. A lyrebird was seen near the rotunda in the carpark, White-browed Scrubwrens were seen and Cuckoos and Whipbirds were heard along the track, while *Olearia lirata*, *Zieria arborescens* and *Prostanthera melissifolia* were some of the plants seen in flower. A shower of rain during lunch effectively ended the day's proceedings and by 1pm all participants made their way either back to Melbourne or Yarram.

Thanks to all who attended the camp and particular thanks to Hazel for compiling the bird list, Judith for compiling the plant list and Graeme Fernandes for acting as tail-end Charlie.

Outdoor Meeting - 9th January 2013 Peter Rogers

A beautiful mild evening greeted members attending our January outdoor meeting, this year held at Bellbird Picnic Area at Yarra Bend. Following a picnic tea a short general meeting was held to the sounds of the surrounding bushland.

With the conclusion of the meeting members investigated the creek bank with the sighting of a juvenile Nankeen Night Heron a highlight. Moving to a good vantage point, members were able to overlook the colony of Grey headed flying foxes in the trees on both sides of the river. As the sun set the flying foxes started to become more active with many depositing their young ones in the creche immediately in front of us. The arrival of dusk saw hundreds of flying foxes leave the colony and fly upstream.

Field Trip 12th January 2013 - Marysville and Lady Talbot Drive

Leaders - Alan and Hazel Veevers

Perfect weather conditions prevailed as 20 members gathered near the Visitor Centre in Marysville. The morning was spent strolling around the nearby Beauty Spot Nature Trail, re-created from the devastation of the 2009 bushfire. The track circled through an area of regrowth forest providing much to occupy enthusiastic naturalists, including butterflies, dragonflies, bugs and lizards, seen taking advantage of the diverse vegetation. A short drive to Yellow Dog Picnic Area, a shady lunch spot, followed. Several different habitats were available for exploration and those still finishing lunch watched others with cameras chasing moths, some clustered around interesting floral specimens, and others peering intently through binoculars at the tree canopy. Afterwards, the group headed, in convoy, to Lady Talbot Drive. The area had been largely burnt out in 2009 and varying degrees of regrowth were visible as we climbed towards the rainforest region. Unfortunately, the road had been damaged by recent storms and was closed to traffic before we reached it. After a look around the immediate vicinity, the excursion was formally closed. Some members turned for home and others stayed, finding a patch of cool rainforest by a tumbling stream, at which afternoon tea was enjoyed, before they, too, headed for home.

Dinosaur Dreaming at Inverloch – 16th February 2013

Leaders - Lisa Nink, Hazel and Alan Veevers

The Caves car park on the coast road between Inverloch and Cape Paterson overflowed its capacity as 30 participants assembled, in perfect weather, for a guided tour of the Dinosaur Dig (DD) on the rock platform below. There was time to read the well-presented information boards alongside the steps as the party descended to the beach. Lisa, our guide and RFNC member, is a DD volunteer who was part-way through a working stint on-site during February. She first explained the ancient history of the area and how the visible geological features, including a fault and a volcanic dyke in the cliff face, were formed. An accessible Cretaceous layer had yielded its first dinosaur bone in 1903 at nearby Eagle's Nest, but serious searches only commenced in 1991, leading to the discovery of the present site.

After walking us through the dig, Lisa showed a collection of fossils, some original and some casts, including local finds and a few from overseas. She explained each one with the ease of an expert as we passed them around the group. We had the opportunity to talk to those working on the site, who were only too pleased to share their knowledge with us. Lisa also showed us some fossilised trees and what is considered to be a theropod dinosaur footprint on the rock platform. Before finishing, Lisa took us to the caves from which the beach gets its name, at which point a hearty vote of thanks was proposed and enthusiastically endowed on our excellent guide.

The party moved into Cape Paterson for lunch, which, for those wishing to participate, was followed by a visit to the rock pools at the Cape end of the beach. Many interesting creatures were found including Brittle Stars, Elephant Snails, Chitons and various Crabs. Such was the interest that a few members stayed on for more "pooling" after the formal closure of the excursion, no doubt leaving only as the incoming tide covered the rocks.

(For further details see the Dinosaurs & Fossils Information Sheet "Dinosaur Dreaming – The Inverloch Fossil Site" at *http://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/)*

OBITUARIES

COWLING (Ross Leonard): Born Castlemaine, Victoria 1.2.1920, passed away Thursday 10.1.2013 aged 92 years.
Ross Cowling is considered a foundation member because he joined during the first year - he actually joined 13 June 1962. Ross served on the Committee as Treasurer from 1965/66 to 1967/68. He was active around the Club, helping with plant surveys, eg in 1972 at Cheong Park with Life Member Fred Rogers. He was a good bushwalker and always reporting interesting sightings both local and far away, eg May 1978 a Pygmy Possum at Tidal River. He contributed his memories of his time in the Club for the 50th Anniversary booklet. The Club's condolences have been conveyed to Joyce and the family.

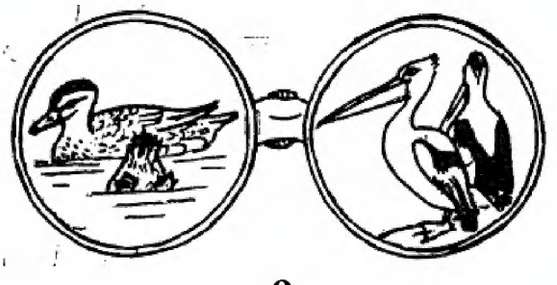
MAHLER (Dorothy) died December 2012 following a long and progressively debilitating illness. Dorothy joined the Club on 12 April 1989. She was a passionate bird watcher and knowledgeable in other aspects of natural history as well. As a member of the Victorian FNC, she brought a wealth of experience to Club activities and was always willing to share. Several Club members attended the memorial service. Our sympathies go to partner and fellow Club member Noel Schleiger and her family.

NATURE NOTES

Bird List Coolart - 9th September 2012

(with thanks to Hazel Veevers)

Freckled Duck	Rainbow Lorikeet
Black Swan	Eastern Rosella
Australasian Shoveler	Shining Bronze Cuckoo
Grey Teal	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Chestnut Teal	Southern Boobook
Pacific Black Duck	Superb Fairy-wren
Hardhead	White-browed Scrubwren
Blue-billed Duck	Brown Thornbill
Hoary-headed Grebe	Spotted Pardalote
Spotted Dove	Eastern Spinebill
Common Bronzewing	White-plumed Honeyeater
Tawny Frogmouth	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Australasian Darter	Little Wattlebird
Little Pied Cormorant	Red Wattlebird
Little Black Cormorant	Golden Whistler
Pied Cormorant	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian White Ibis	Grey Butcherbird
Straw-necked Ibis	Australian Magpie
Black-shouldered Kite	Grey Fantail
Brown Goshawk	Willie Wagtail
Swamp Harrier	Little Raven
Nankeen Kestrel	Australian Reed-warbler
Purple Swamphen	Little Grassbird
Dusky Moorhen	Welcome Swallow
Eurasian Coot	Common Blackbird [I]
Silver Gull	Common Myna [I]
Galah	European Goldfinch [I]



Bird List You Yangs - 13th October 2012

Straw-necked Ibis	New Holland Honeyeater
Black Kite	Brown-headed Honeyeater
Whistling Kite	Spotted Pardalote
Brown Goshawk	Buff-rumped Thornbill
Collared Sparrowhawk	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Yellow Thornbill
Brown Falcon	Scarlet Robin
Common Bronzewing	Eastern Yellow Robin
Galah	Silvereye
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Red-browed Finch
Musk Lorikeet	Weebill
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Eastern Rosella	Rufous Whistler
Pallid Cuckoo	Grey Shrike-thrush
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Willie Wagtail
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	Grey Fantail
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Restless Flycatcher
Laughing Kookaburra	White-winged Chough
Superb Fairy-wren	Australian Magpie
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Common Blackbird [I]
White-plumed Honeyeater	European Goldfinch [I]
Red Wattlebird	43 species

Marysville and Lady Talbot Drive - 12th January 2013

Butterflies and Moths	
Australian (Yellow) Admiral	*Vanessa itea*
Striped Xenica	*Oreixenica kershawi*
Macleay's Swallowtail	*Graphium macleayanus*
Varied Sword-grass Brown	*Tisiphone abeona*
Varied Dusky-blue	*Candalides hyacinthina*
Common Brown	*Heteronympha merope*
Common Grass-blue	*Zizinia labradus*
Cabbage White	*Pieris rapae*
Bogong Moth	*Agrotis infusa*
Grapevine Moth	*Phalaenoides tristifica*

Dragonflies and Damselflies	
Southern Evening Darner	*Telephlebia brevicauda*
Mountain Tigertail	*Eusynthemis tillyardi*
Southern Tigertail	*Eusynthemis guttata*
Powdered Flatwing (Damselfly)	*Austroargiolestes calcaris*

Other	
Spider Hunting Wasp	*Cryptocheilus bicolor*
Green Scarab Beetle	*Diphucephala colaspidoides*
Yellow-winged Locust	*Gastrimargus musicus*
Southern Water Skink	*Eulamprus tympanum*
Sawfly larvae	*Perga* sp.

Birds	
Australian Wood Duck	Eastern Spinebill
Pacific Black Duck	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Red Wattlebird
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Australian Magpie
Crimson Rosella	Pied Currawong
Superb Lyrebird	Grey Currawong
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Grey Fantail
Nankeen Kestrel	Flame Robin
White-throated Treecreeper	Pink Robin
Superb Fairy-wren	Silvereye
White-browed Scrubwren	Red-browed Finch
Brown Thornbill	23 species

Tawny Frogmouth (left) and Ibis (right) at Coolart September 2012
Eleanor Dilley

Dates for your Diary

RFNC Spring Weekend (13th – 15th September) to Lake Tyers, Gippsland
SEANA Spring Weekend (11th – 14th October) - Numurkah
SEANA Autumn 2014 Weekend (May 2014) to Marysville– Upper Goulburn FNC

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